

20 April 1972

RF-4C 68-0598

14 TRS, 432 TRW, USAF, Udorn
Maj Edward Knight Elias (POW)
1Lt Ernest S Clark (survived)

An RF-4C was despatched on a reconnaissance mission to obtain photographs of a truck park near Dong Hoi. Near the target the aircraft dived to avoid a SAM but was hit by a second missile at 6,000 feet five miles west of the town. The aircraft's tail and rear fuselage burst into flames and the crew ejected a few seconds later when it became obvious that the aircraft was no longer flyable. 1Lt Clark's parachute was ripped as he fell through the jungle canopy and he sustained several broken ribs when he hit the ground. 'Woody' Clark was eventually rescued by an HH-53C after spending two days and two nights hiding from NVA troops who hacked their way through the jungle trying to find him. Maj Elias was less fortunate and was captured after evading for three days. Edward Elias was taken to Hanoi where he and several other prisoners were visited by the actress and peace activist Jane Fonda. On 25 September 1972 Edward Elias, together with Lt(jg) M L Gartley and Lt(jg) N A Charles, was released to The Coalition, a US peace organisation that was visiting Hanoi.